DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 553 HE 006 579

TITLE College Administrators for Today's Non-Traditional Students: Managers or Leaders?
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 13p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Policy; *Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Educational Alternatives; *Educational Innovation; Educational Needs; Educational Objectives; *Higher Education; Performance Based Education

ABSTRACT

Effective functioning of experimental programs will require substantial leadership responsibility from college administrators. Conservatism and "resistance to change" are "signposts" of historical precedence in higher education circles. The traditionalists who yearn for the "status quo" must be psychologically conditioned or weaned; and the unrealistic optimists must be restrained at all costs. Administrative leaders should assist faculty in developing an instructional program that is solidly based. If the administrative style is managerial, the administrator will abstain and rationalize that it is his or her job to manage the curricula data and not admissions. If the administrative style is that of leadership, the job will extend to assessment, evaluation, and plans for future growth. A first step is to admit that there might be alternatives to what is considered tradition. Some alternatives discussed are experimental programs including: (1) Colorado College Plan; (2) Mount Vernon College, Washington, D.C.; (3) Alvernia College, Reading, Pennsylvania; (4) Common College, California; (5) Empire State College, New York. (Author/KE)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED108553

College Administrators For Today's Non-Traditional Students:
Managers or Leaders?

College administrators are constantly challenged to consider ways of encouraging faculty personal and professional growth. The responsibility for curriculum and instruction should not be taken out of the hands of faculty by over-anxious administrators, however. What is needed is moral support, support staff and resources for faculty to draw upon for experimentation which is vital to the instruction of students in a diverse population.

No academic agenda, according to George W. Bonham, Editor of Change, should remain oblivious to the central purpose of living. Ernest Boyer, Chancellor of the State University of New York observes:

> As the world becomes more complicated, as the amount of information increases, as the problem of getting jobs and the nature of those jobs become more complex and questions of survival more intense, education will matter as much as and more than it does today.[1]

The urgency of educational and institutional flexibility holds forth great implications for educational administrators who must share the responsibility for developing programs to meet the diverse needs of students. The new depression in higher education, according to the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education, has both intellectual and fiscal components. The nation needs to develop on a large scale basis, just as the Commission has done on an ad hoc basis, the possibility of devoting the talents and energies of designated men and women to the larger issues of national directions in learning.[3]

1. "Is College Necessary?" -Caroline Bird Talks With Ernest Boyer, Change, February, 1975
2. Bonham, George W., "The Carnegie Commission: An Editorial," Change, November, 1973

AE006579

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Pursuant to this suggestion by the Commission, the central theme of this paper is the emphasis of educational leadership as it relates to the achievement of egalitarianism in education. If reform tendencies within colleges and universities in non-traditional teaching are to continue in a significant manner, academic leaders must share in the sincere effort to recognize basic trends in higher education.

Obviously, an agenda for administrators should surely include such central matters as efforts to revamp curricular approaches for the "new" or non-traditional student. In order for administrators to be creative and responsive, there needs to be a heightened awareness or intelligence concerning the population for whom programs are designed.

Who is the non-traditional student? The Mexican-American, the Peurto-Rican, the Black slum resident, the Appalachian Mountain white? Strangely, the classification transcends ethnic limitations and includes also the student from any atypical group- the farm boy who seems lost, the wealthy kid who must constantly escape in his porsche, the middle class youth who is bored, the ex-prison mate, the retired person, the restless housewife or the young divorcee who needs to retool or retrain to support a child. In the aggregate, all of the above are distinguished by a uniqueness that defies the traditional approach to learning. The various lifestyles to which each has become accustomed represents a disparity not to be ignored. It appears then that programs that take into account individual differences are desirable. There are many arguments for diversity, but the best one that immediately comes to mind may be Darwin's findings that the species with the most variations is the one most likely to survive environmental stress.

The administrator, whether in the Junior College, small Liberal Arts college, the urban university, the experimental college or the cluster college, cannot simply go on doing things as they have done them before. Higher education has passed the point where an administrator can smile benignly at each new crisis, secure in the thought that, no matter what, everything turns out all right in the end. We already have clear evidence of institutions which had to pay a very high price for short-sighted administration.

Characteristically, short-sighted administrators, among other things, have relied more upon predicated precedence and the exigency of the moment than on insight provided by research and other empirical evidences. Cooperative planning for academic goals (a priority of first order for the academic administrator) should involve exploring a variety of alternative programs and taking a closer look at research. The results should help in pointing the way to criteria against which to measure educational effectiveness.

Of particular relevance is the research conducted at the State University of New York by Arthur Chickering and others which focuses on improving the writing and execution of learning contracts at Empire State College.[3] Empire State College is not organized just to accomodate people of 33- that's the average age. It is also available for an 18-year old who might choose to go to college while traveling or working. The option of studying at a campus and living in the residence hall or studying outside a campus by the utilization of a learning center where students consult with a mentor and organize a plan of study presents the type of arrangement now being introduced at many institutions.

3. Chickering, Arthur,et al.,"Empire State College Learning Contracts: Report of the President's Advisory Committee on Academic Quality," Empire State College, State University of New York, 1973

Consider also a study by John L. Veager and Diane Davis at Pittsburgh University entitled, "The Development of an Instructional Delivery System for External Studies in Higher Education." Many universities are considering the potential of initiating non-resident study programs in recognition of the diverse segments of the educational population.

Colorado College decided to look for a better way of teaching and learning, a better way of using student and faculty energy and time. Colorado, willing to experiment, is one of a relative handful of colleges to respond to much more than lip service to the clamor of a few years ago for an end to the oppression of grades. The college groped with the issue and switched with half measures to pass-fail option in all courses.

After two years of intense consultation involving the entire college community, in the Fall of 1970 it established the Colorado College Plan -also called the block plan. The academic year is divided into blocks of three and one-half weeks each, separated by breaks of four and one-half days instead of semesters or quarters.

Some courses consist of two or more consecutive blocks, and half courses, taken two at a time, are available. The latter option, however, has lost popularity, especially with students, because each half course tends to become a whole one in the intensive-study atmosphere and two whole courses taken simultaneously prove an excessive load.

The Colorado system is probably the major current example of what has been dubbed the "modular calendar" but the plan has both historical and contemporary

parallels. The most famous intensive-study plan started in 1934 at Hiram College was modeled in part on experiments at a couple of small schools in the nineteenth century.[4] Hiram's arrangement combined hour long "running courses" with intensive study of one subject seven hours a day over the nine weeks that made up a quarter (later changed to five seven-week terms a year). Despite its popularity with students, it was dropped because of resistance from newer faculty members and a fear that outsiders were getting the idea that Hiram was a place for problem students.

More recently, a number of colleges have adopted some variation of the modular calendar for at least part of their program. Mount Vernon College in Washington, D. C., a women's school, divides the academic year into ten three-week blocks with courses offered in different combinations of blocks. The common pattern there is for students to take courses over a six-week span.

Students in the Institute for Law and Justice at little Alvernia College in Reading, Pennsylvania, spend a week of intensive study in class, do two days of field work and write a term paper, devoting in this way a total of two weeks to each course.[5]

In addition to the intensive study, the plan has a number of consequences that are largely advantageous. There is much closer contact between students and faculty and a major practical gain from the block plan is flexibility. A geology class can schedule a field trip for a whole day or even a whole week, since there are no other classes to interfere. Laboratories can be used throughout

4. Jenkins, Evan," Colorado Block Plan" : A Research Report, Change, February, 1975
5. Ibid.

the day. Anthropology students can go to New Mexico or even Mexico, language students to Europe, without disrupting their entire year.

Class attendance has risen- the college says 90 per cent of its students attend class 90-100 per cent of the time and the student-faculty ration is 14 to 1. Associate Dean Maxwell Taylor points out, "marginal students can survive better" - one bad block does not a semester make, and the temporary disruption caused by a personal problem tends to lead to flunking just one course instead of five. There are some limitations:

1) The faculty workload seems to be heavier over the year and a common complaint is that there's little time for research.

2) There are problems of continuity and coverage. The need for drill in some subjects- language, music, and dance, for example, has led to adjunct courses of an hour each.

3) Isolation of students and teachers from their fellows is a by-product of genuinely intensive study which is worrisome. So is the intellectual isolation that tends to come from total immersion in one subject at a time.

Despite the problems, the block plan will continue; the faculty voted in November to keep it indefinitely. With 90 of 135 faculty members voting at the 1800 enrollment institution, the tally was 80 in favor, 5 against and 5 abstaining. Dr. Worner, President, expresses the optimism when he says, "No one around here is sure we've found the answer, but we feel we've made some real headway."

John Egerton gives an interesting account of an alternative educational pattern which has emerged in an uncommon way- Common College. This three-year old institution has a dozen students, four full-time faculty members, one alumnus, no physical plant, and a property inventory that includes little of note except an eight-door checker limousine that registers 85,000 miles.

Common College has many non-traditional students. They range from young, ex-college students to middle-aged housewives. They get into things that once repelled or frightened them. The College makes connection between interests and opportunities by arranging classes, tutorials, and apprenticeships. Diverse interests and pursuits underscore the uniqueness of Common College. Students make wine, lay floors, engage in dance therapy, drug-abuse education and drug addiction, automobile repair and alternative energy repair sources, backpacking and cross-country skiing in the Sierras, a Shakespeare festival in Oregon and a month on the back road in Mexico.

Common College is an institution that molds itself to the individual's needs. It calls itself a private, suburban college without walls. It encourages men and women of every race, religion and ethnic background to become a part of the educational community.

Located on the mountain-fringed peninsula, south of San-Francisco in the Woodside-Portola Valley communities of San Mateo County, Common College operates continuously 12 months a year with no quarters or semesters. It charges $2,000 tuition and provides about half of its students with some degree of financial aid. It is seeking accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

The philosophy of the college is expressed in certain basic assumptions. To state them briefly:

1) Many people who could profit from higher education have been kept from it or have dropped out of it;

2) Life-long learners and doers(as well as scholars) need opportunities for formal education;

3) The best training for decision-making, problem solving and participating in social change is in the larger world;

4) The learner should be always in the process of doing real things;

5) Genuine evaluation by self and others is critical for a highly functioning being- but the evaluation provides hopefully for other criteria than grades, credits, units, and evaluation by examinations;

6) Colleges often serve best as brokers, putting students in touch with projects, agencies, jobs, teachers, places and experiences which complement what they are interested in learning.

Common College presents a blend of traditional and contemporary ideas. Jean Wirth, the founder, assembled ingeniously an impressive array of both full-time and part-time experienced and talented professionals. A typical week may involve an interesting mixture of observing, reading or studying; working at a paying job in the community; two or three hours in a tutorial session; two to twelve hours at a nearby institution taking courses; two to ten hours in physical activity; and one evening in community pot luck dinners, guest speakers, or community planning sessions.

All this activity eventually ends up in some part of the student's portfolio, a record that may include everything from transcriptions of tape-recorded evalua - tion sessions to lists of goals and achievements.

The Chronicle of Higher Education in its February 3,1975 issue designates Alverno College as the country's prime practitioner of competency-based education. To graduate from Alverno, a student needs neither grades nor credit hours. Rather she must amass 40 "competence-level units" that, the college says, will indicate how well she can perform the tasks of which every educated person should be capable.

Eight competencies have been identified as necessary for responsible living in our society. The College assures students that they will:

1) Develop effective communication skill.

2) Sharpen analytical capabilities.

3) Develop workable problem-solving skill.

4) Develop facility in making independent value judgments and independent decisions.

5) Develop facility for social interaction.

6) Achieve understanding of the relationship of the individual and the environment.

7) Develop awareness and understanding of the world in which the individual lives.

8) Develop knowledge, understanding and responsiveness to the arts and humanities.

The movement towards competency-based education brings together a group of old reformers who have charged that liberal education's focus on content rather than "process" is dangerous in an era of rapid change, and a group of "new" reformers who say that colleges and universities must become more accountable for the claims they make to students and for the ways in which they spend public money.

Sister Joel, President of Alverno, says that the college did not decide one day to go into competency-based education, but rather began with an investigation of what it really did for its graduates. Over a period of several years, the examination led from such questions as "What do the disciplines really offer in terms of the outcomes it produces for students?" and from there to the concept of competency that a liberally educated person ought to possess.

Since the program has been in operation for only two years and thus has no juniors or Seniors in it yet, the college has not yet devised all the ways it will validate competencies at the upper levels of development- the fifth and sixth levels that will be required before students receive their degrees.

Whether what Alverno is doing proves successful will depend on whether its graduates actually possess the competencies and are the"competent" people that Sister Joel hopes they will become. Officials at Alverno, along with the President, believe they can succeed.

The effective functioning of the types of experimental programs just described will require substantial leadership responsibility from college administrators. This is partly true because of the inherent nature of both faculty and administrators. Conservatism and "resistance to change" are signposts" of historical precedence in higher education circles. There are many curricula that have not changed in 20 years despite contraindications. So there will be problems. The traditionalists who yearn for the "status quo" must be psychologically conditioned or weaned; and the unrealistic optimists must be restrained at all costs. This implies that administrative leaders should assist faculty in developing an instructional program that is solidly based. The administrator, though creative, must strike a delicate balance, if at all possible. He dare not alienate those with direct responsibility for instruction or the student suffers. Before the institution of any program, both defenders and detractors must somehow discover the relevance of whatever programs are being proposed in light of the overall mission and goals of the institution which should at all times prove compatible with societal needs.

To create the impression that this is an easy task is not my intention. The effective functioning of the types of experimental programs alluded to earlier will require a continuing program of research on the goals and outcomes of education, the psychological nature of individual differences, and the psychology of learning.

The area of research that has been most seriously neglected in the last decades, according to Flanagan of the Research Institutes of America, has been the formulation of goals and outcomes in education. Who should take the leadership in establishing these? Who should point new directions in developing an educational program that will meet the needs of the non-traditional student? If the administrative style is managerial, the administrator will abstain and rationalize that it is his or her job to manage the curricula data and not admissions. In short, the non-traditional student either makes it or he doesn't. The administrator who views himself as leader, as a catalyst for change, or as a sensitized individual who is conscious of where he's going and how to get there, will extend his vision to include assessment, evaluation and plans for future growth.

Clark Kerr, Chairman of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education says that "Faculty members are looking to the golden years of the 1960's and trustees are looking at the current opinion polls and discovering that higher education isn't up there anymore."

Despite scarce resources, increased pressures, Freshmen students who can't begin to communicate effectively either on paper or off, tight budgets, and just plain "hard times", there remains a host of non-traditional students whom America has promised an opportunity for learning. A commitment of this magnitude has frightened many of the weak and demands serious, concentrated effort on the part of those who would be stronger. Certainly a first step would be to admit that there might be alternatives to what we are now doing as tradition. We as college administrators should in all likelihood consider non-traditional programs for non-traditional students.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bonnam, George W., " An American Agenda: I" -an Editorial, Change, February, 1975

Broudy, Harry S., " Educational Alternatives- Why Not? Why Not." Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., March, 1973

Cass, James, "Are There Really Any Alternatives?" Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., March, 1973

Chickering, Arthur, et al. "Empire State Learning Contracts : Report of the President's Advisory Committee on Academic Quality, " Empire State College, State University of New York, Saratoga Springs, 1973

Cox, Richard C., "Confusion Between Norm-Referenced and Criterion-Referenced Measurement, " Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., January, 1974

Crocker, W. A., " Ten Commandments for a PBTE Developer," Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., January, 1974

Darcy, C. Michael, "Three Stages in the Development of CBTE, " Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., January, 1974

Doolittle, Lawrence W., " Harold's Report on the Lock Haven Experience' : A CBTE Adventure," Phi Delta Kappan , Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., January, 1974

Harcleroad, Fred F., editor, The Issues of the Seventies, Jossey-Bass Inc., San Francisco, 1970

Jenkins, Evan, "Colorado Block Plan" : A Research Report, Change , February, 1975.

McNamara, William, " The Institute for Educational Leadership, " Change, February, 1975

Parker, John L. and Withycombe, Richard J., "Mediation in an Alternative Teacher Training Program," Phi Delta Kappan, Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., March, 1973

Smith, Mortimer, "CBE Views the Alternatives, " Phi Delta Kappan , Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., March, 1973

Sodomka, Dennis, " Education For All," The Washington Post, September 29,197

"Is College Necessary? Caroline Bird Talks with Ernest Boyer," Change, February, 1975

"The Uncommon College" : A Report by John Egerton, Change, April, 1974